
Chapter 1

SHE STARTED at the knock on the door, although she had no real right to, since it was hardly unexpected.

Early bird that she was, she'd been sitting there for quite some time, in various tense and uncomfortable positions, moving from the easy chair to the pseudo-office chair to the couch, then back to the easy chair, and even occasionally, motivated by her own sheer nervousness to actually pace back and forth in front of the window. And anyone who looked at her would immediately know that pacing wasn't something she did very often.

Brielle Daley rose from her tentative perch on the window sill and headed to the door, wondering with every step what the hell it was that she thought she was doing.

Sooner than she wanted, she arrived there, in time to hear a slightly more insistent round of knocks.

Taking several steps away—although she couldn't have said why—she said, "I'm here. Just a sec."

Straightening her comfortable, sensible ensemble of a non-descript blouse and skirt—topped off with a pair of shoes that looked like they could have belonged to her nana

—she smoothed imaginary wrinkles out of her outfit and again stood in front of the door. She felt as if she were a schoolgirl who had been sent to the principal for some kind of infraction.

But she wouldn't really know how that felt, since she had been a model student—a brown noser of the highest order, frankly; ever eager to please—and had never once been subject to any kind of discipline during any of her school years.

And if that scenario were true, she would be the one knocking on his door.

Standing there perseverating about things like that wasn't helping her any—if anything, it was making her feel even more nervous than she had before. So she forced herself to take a breath, look through the peephole, flick the little ball-catchy thingy above the handle, and open the door.

He was standing there in a suit that looked like it cost more than her condo, but then she knew that couldn't be the case. She didn't think gigolos made that kind of money—although she could be wrong.

And the briefcase he was holding had definitely seen better days.

Still, he'd managed—by simply appearing there, where she'd contracted for him to be—to make her feel like a dowdy old maid. Bri didn't know what she thought he'd wear to this weird meeting of theirs, but she guessed it wasn't a suit.

"Hello, Jennifer," he said smoothly. It was kind of jarring to hear that name in reference to herself, but she was more than smart enough not to use her real name in that kind of situation.

She'd always loved a British accent, having seen every possible period drama the BBC and its affiliates ever offered. She hadn't seen that noted on his profile, which was surpris-

ing. It certainly would have been a selling point for her and a lot of other women, too, she would imagine.

Normally, she found it infinitely soothing but, at the same time, incredibly sexy.

But that didn't translate to in-person, apparently.

The truth was that there was pretty much nothing that was going to calm her anxiety about what she was doing, except—perhaps—to stop doing it and send him packing.

But now that he was right there—close enough for her to smell his incredibly wonderful aftershave—she couldn't quite bring herself to say the words that would do that.

Instead, she stood there, her instantly Sahara dry mouth hanging open unbecomingly as she gaped at him. He was even more handsome than she'd thought from his picture, which merely ratcheted up her stress level from the "I might maybe survive this" to the "run for your life" level.

Without saying a word—because she didn't have the spit necessary to do so, and she'd rather not have him think that she was pre-verbal—Bri turned and headed into the room, which wasn't something she necessarily wanted to do, but if she didn't sit down quickly, she was going to faint.

She'd been pale when she'd opened the door, and she'd only grown paler—if that was even possible—in the few seconds since she'd let him in. Branson Keller followed her into the room, closing and locking the two available locks on the door before using his long legs to eat up the carpet between them, worried that he might need to catch her if she crumpled to the floor, and it looked like that was a real possibility.

She literally dropped into one of the occasional chairs, and he could see how hard she was shaking long before he got to her.

Tucking his briefcase next to the sofa, he dropped grace-

fully to one knee in front of her— but carefully not crowding her— asking in a calm, quiet tone, "Jenny, are you all right?"

"No!" she panted. "I don't think that I can do this!" she barely got out, drawing a ragged breath between each word.

"Let's not worry about that at the moment. I want to get you calmed down." He glanced around the room, noting that there was an honor bar, which he crossed to immediately. Upon perusing the offerings, he took a couple of the pony bottles of low priced— but somehow still outrageously expensive—whiskey. Grabbing the glass that had the pretty fluted paper cap on it, he poured the amber liquid into it and presented her with the glass.

She wasn't looking at him, but at the floor instead.

"Jenny. Take a sip of this." There was a mild hint of dominance in that order.

Her auburn head came up then went right back down again. "Oh, I don't drink."

"Because of your religion?"

"No."

"Because you're allergic?"

"No."

"Why, then?"

"Because I don't like the taste," she barely got out.

Branson grimaced. He didn't like how she was breathing and knew he needed to get her to calm down. This was the quickest method he knew.

"Then I'm not asking," he said, using a much stricter tone.

Her head snapped up as if he'd given her an electric shock, eyes locking with his.

More gently, he encouraged, "Take the glass and a healthy swallow please."

Bri found the small courtesy at the end of that order surprisingly sexy, although she wasn't sure why. He was

looking at her expectantly, and for the first time in her life, she knew that there was someone in front of her who wasn't going to allow her to get away with disobeying him.

That thought was both arousing and alarming, in what were pretty equal levels, at that point.

Bri had learned early that being a good student who was able to express herself well, along with being polite and mature, allowed her to have been considered a pseudo-adult for most of her life—long before she should have, really. As an only child, she'd spent most of her time around adults, anyway, and her parents treated her more as a contemporary than their child most of the time. And as long as she showed them what they wanted to see from her, she could get away with almost anything. And if they caught on to anything, she had an almost foolproof method to handle that, too, by, essentially, admitting to her wrongdoing and throwing herself on the mercy of the court.

Luckily, she didn't really have any habits for which she could end up in real trouble. Bri rebelled a bit in high school, but smoking and staying out late was the entirety of it, since she couldn't stand the taste of alcohol then, either. She did end up skipping a lot of school in order to stay home and masturbate—once she'd discovered that wonderful ability—but she was more than capable of mimicking her mother's voice to call the attendance office as her, and she made sure to make up the work she needed to before it became a problem.

Because she was so well-behaved, her parents weren't really looking for her to do anything bad—and were just as happy not to have to—and she easily got away with the small things she wanted to do without them ever knowing she'd done them.

But the man in front of her wasn't her parent, and she knew that he wouldn't be inclined to let her get away with

the things she'd been getting away with all her life. In general, she knew how to get around pretty much anyone in authority—her parents, teachers, and even bosses—by extrapolating what she'd done with her parents when she was caught out after curfew.

If she did do something wrong and it got noticed, she made a rule early on not to wait to be caught, but to walk into her dad's study—or her boss's office—and confess completely and as sincerely as she could—and apparently, that was pretty darned sincerely. She had obviously missed her calling and should have gone into acting. Doing so almost always eliminated any kind of negative repercussions that might have resulted in conjunction with her behavior.

Her parents were a little less impressed with her doing that, but then, she'd been doing it with them much longer. Bosses, however, were always nearly thunderstruck that she'd do that. And although she was enough of a detail-oriented person who was highly self-motivated to do well, so that kind of situation didn't crop up very often, her willingness to "own up" to whatever mistake she'd made was often mentioned in annual reviews, and she directly attributed several promotions and even more raises to doing that early on in her career.

It wasn't as if she was a coldly calculating person, though. She was pleasant and fun to work with, but also unafraid to take the lead and to do whatever was necessary to ensure that a project was done well, or a client was very happy with her willingness to go above and beyond to make sure that was true.

And she had more than enough friends, who had all come to count on her for a lot of belly laughs, as well as her willingness to be a caretaker to them when they needed it—and even when they didn't think they needed it. Bri was also known to be generous to a fault when someone was in need,

even to the point of putting herself in a bind, although that happened less nowadays since her salary had risen commensurate with her abilities.

Bri could be scrupulously honest, too, especially with herself and her friends—perhaps even a bit too much with either of them. She was very hard on herself about a lot of things unnecessarily, and as she'd matured, although she'd continued to unhesitatingly admit when she'd screwed up, it was much less calculated than it had been when she was younger and much more heartfelt.

Guilt was a wonderful motivator.

The incredibly gorgeous man who was still on one knee before her wouldn't be susceptible to her trying to cajole, impress, or otherwise connive in any way that would change how he would decide to deal with her if she disobeyed him.

That was one of the reasons why she'd chosen him originally and stuck with him while they chatted online about possibly meeting. She barely knew him, but she knew that about him without the slightest doubt.

It was exactly what she needed—but was terrified of experiencing at the same time.

And yet here she was, alone in a hotel room, with him looking at her like that—just like she'd thought a Dom would, holding her eyes, staring up at her with a set—but not angry—look on his face as he waited the scant second that ticked by until she took the glass from him and downed the entire two fingers worth in one gulp.

That, of course, set her to coughing practically to the point of retching, and before she knew it, he was pressing a bottle of water into her hand. "Take a few small swallows. I don't fancy ending up at the ER tonight."

Without thinking, Bri did exactly as he suggested, and the coughing subsided.

"Feeling a bit better?" he asked, turning just enough to

put the empty glass on the end table but leaving the water with her.

Bri was feeling well enough to note that he continued to remain on his knees in front of her, despite the fact that that was supposedly where she would be, in most D/s fantasies.

"Yes, thank you," she croaked. The choking had left her voice hoarse. "Oh, lovely. Now I sound like James Earl Jones."

He threw his head back and laughed heartily at that, and she found herself mesmerized by both the sound and the sight of it. He laughed as if he had never once in this lifetime ever worried about what anyone else thought of him—with a full-throated joy and abandon that Bri despaired of ever feeling, at least in regards to the situation in which she currently found herself.

"Well, you don't look like him, so we're good," he said with a grin.

"You wouldn't do James Earl Jones?"

"No, men aren't my deal. I had enough opportunities for that when I was in public school. Not that there's anything wrong with it."

Bri smiled at what she assumed was his unintentional Seinfeld reference. "I know. I just love his voice. He wouldn't even have to touch me to get me off—he could just talk to me from across the room." She actually shivered, and he knew that she hadn't even realized she'd done it.

But he certainly had.

"I'm very," she pronounced the word very carefully, "aural." Bri immediately went to explain, "That means—"

"I know what it means, Jenny," he informed her smoothly.

She colored prettily. "Of course, you do. You probably have a much better education than I do, being British."

"Is that a matter of concern to you?" he asked, moving to sit on the couch, opposite her.

"Well, it's going to make me sound like a prig, but yes. I like smart people. That was one of the things that I really liked about your profile on the site—no grammatical or spelling errors. I mean, there's a spellchecker built into the site, for fuck's sake—use it!"

He gave her a small smile. "Well, I'm glad you saw something that caught your eye about me."

"That, and you're intimidatingly gorgeous."

"Intimidatingly?" he repeated, with a question in his voice.

"Oh, yes. I mean, when I responded to your ad, I did it on a complete whim. I really never expected to hear back from you."

Dom frowned. "Why not?"

She could feel that her face was bright red. "C'mon. You're gorgeous and I'm... not. You must have zillions of women on that app who are willing to pay big bucks to be with you." It had amazed her just how affordable his hourly rate was, too. That was another reason why she had chosen him, not that she was going to tell him that. "Do you mind if I ask how many clients you've had—or have?"

"Several." His answer was maddeningly vague. Several just now? Several over the time he'd been in that particular profession, if that was what it should be called? Bri really wanted to get him talking about what he did for a living, but she could sense that he didn't want to, so she let it go.

"Is Dom your real name?"

"No. It's what I am, and I think it's easier for people to remember, just because of that." His eyes narrowed on her, and she tensed, surprised to find that she had relaxed almost completely until then. "And Jennifer had better not be your real name, either."

"No, it's not. I've done everything the Innerwebs says I should do to make sure I'm safe." The fact that—before they'd met—he'd been very insistent that she do all of those things in regards to her own safety had made her feel that much better about seeing him.

Her phone began to chime a reminder for her to text a friend—well, more of an acquaintance, because none of her friends had any idea that she was there. "Speaking of which," she said, sending a quick text that she was fine.

"Very good."

It was impossible for her not to feel a certain sense of accomplishment at that bit of praise. She was still that same people pleaser she'd always been, at heart, although nowadays, since she'd moved into management, she had to do less of that.

"Are you feeling better? More relaxed?"

"Yes, I am."

"Next time, don't try to drink it all at once."

"You said a healthy swallow!" She leaned forward to argue automatically, then shrank back, as if she expected him to grab her and begin whaling on her when she'd done that.

Bran really didn't like the slightly terrified look she was wearing, although he completely understood it, and he also understood that pointing it out to her would only make her just that much more uncomfortable. So, instead, he leaned back on the couch, perched an ankle on his knee and said, purely experimentally—because he knew exactly what she was going to say—"Do you want to come sit on the couch with me?"

He immediately began to wave his hand in front of himself when he literally watched her tense back up again. "I retract that. I know you don't want to. Don't worry about it. In fact, I know you won't be able to do this, but you don't have to worry about anything—that's one of the best things

about being a sub. You really don't have to worry about anything. That's what I'm for."

Her nervous giggle was surprisingly endearing. "Oh yeah. I am so not interested in having to be responsible for everything that happens in a scene. Way too much responsibility. Just the thought of that is enough to give me hives."

He grinned at her. "So what do you do in real life?"

"I'm in... well, let's just say the financial area and leave it at that." She worked for a bank, but he didn't need to know about that detail.

"Really?" He sounded surprised.

"Yeah. Why?"

Bran shrugged. "I don't know. We haven't talked that much, but I just got the feeling that you were the artistic type."

"No, I'm the 'nose to the grindstone', 'live for my work' kind, I hate to say. I've been working in the same place since I graduated from college. I've never once been late, and I've never taken a sick day."

"I know the type," he said, frowning again. "Never?"

Bri shook her head. "Never. I don't get sick much, and frankly, beyond work and a few friends—as pathetic as it sounds to me now that I'm saying it out loud—I don't have much of a life. I'm depressingly practical and predictable. I save my money, pay my bills, and go on the occasional trip." She fiddled with her fingers in her lap as he watched her intently. "I'll be staring all too closely at fifty in the next few years, and this is the most unconventional, unusual thing I've ever done in my life." She gave a self-deprecating snort. "And I began to regret it... uh... as soon as I booked you."

It was quite an admission, one she made while staring into his eyes, as if challenging him to say something critical or hurtful to her.

"I don't think you're at all alone in that. I imagine the times I've been stood up have been for exactly that reason."

Her eyes widened. "I can't imagine standing you up."

His soft laugh helped her relax more than the booze had.

"Well, thank you very much for that." Bri adjusted herself in the chair. "I'm not a very social sort. I haven't dated anyone since high school—believe it or not—and even then, it wasn't particularly physical." She shrugged. "I feel like I've missed out on a lot of life, and I've long since stopped waiting for Prince Charming anymore—not that I ever really was in the first place. So I decided that I'd do something I've always wanted to try."

"When did you know that you were into D/s?"

"Very early on. Like, earlier than it should have been, which is a red flag, from what I understand. But if there was any sexual abuse in my background, I don't remember it, and I intend to leave it that way. I've been reading D/s fiction practically since I learned how to read. It's kind of weird that I'm submissive, because I'm such a dedicated type A in everything else about my life. But maybe that's why—so that I can relax and let someone else take care of me for a little while."

Bran nodded. "I think that's a big part of it for a lot of people."

"Have you always been... dommish?"

"Pretty much. Like you, I'm a type A—although less of one now— but mine carried over into the bedroom. I very much enjoy being in charge there, too." He could see that she was breathing evenly and had vacated her ugly shoes in favor of curling her feet beneath herself. "Why don't you come sit on the couch with me, Jenny. You don't have to sit next to me, but I would like to be closer to you while we talk."

They had talked a bit online about what she expected

from their meeting, and she had told him that she was likely to be tremendously nervous and might not even be able to get near him at first. He had reassured her that they could take as long as she needed to, to feel comfortable. He had told her that he was a very patient man and that he wouldn't demand anything from her that she wasn't comfortable with.

One thing he'd said to her when they were chatting online really stuck with her. "This is not meant to be a race. It's meant to be a leisurely stroll. Thus, as the sub, everything will be done on your timeline, not mine, although I will encourage you to expand your comfort zone a bit."

It wasn't a demand, or even an order. It was more of a simple expectation that she would obey him.

And he was right. For all of her being an extremely motivated person who might have been judged by others to be somewhat stodgy and unyielding because of it, Bran could tell that she still had that "eager to please" component to her personality, too. Part of what he loved about doing this kind of thing was coaxing women out of their comfortable shell and introducing them to a place where they could feel safe without it and realize a more complete version of their sexual selves.

It took her a couple of minutes, during which he asked very neutral, mundane things, like whether or not she liked her job and how much of a commute she had.

At first, she had bridled at what he'd said. Bri hated to be told what to do. Then she nearly laughed out loud, considering she was paying him an exorbitant amount to do just that for her. Then, she took a deep breath, expelled every bit of it, and crossed the Rubicon to wedge herself into the other corner of the couch, as far away from him as she could get and still be on the couch with him.

At the same time, he rose to check out the honor bar again, turning with another pony bottle of whiskey in his big

hand. He'd taken a stride towards her with it held out to her, but then he stopped, retracting his hand.

"When was the last time you ate something?"

"This morning. I was much too anxious about meeting you to eat anything after that."

He turned to grab another glass and poured the contents into it for himself before settling down on the couch again, half facing her.

"If I recall correctly..." and he did. He had a bit of an eidetic memory, especially when it came to his clients' likes and dislikes. "...you said that you'd never dabbled in D/s with anyone else."

"That's right." Bri cleared her throat, feeling nervous again, although she was trying to tamp it down.

"So you've never been spanked?"

"Nope. Never."

"Not even by your parents?"

"No, I was a very spoiled—well, as much as a middle class kid can be—only child."

"Ah." He nodded, as Bri marveled at his full head of thick, wavy, black hair. "And you said that was really the extent of what you wanted, right?"

"Yeah, I'm not into the heavier aspects of things—whips and chains, etcetera."

"You want a softer Dom."

"I believe so, yes. Is that usually what women want from you?"

"Sometimes."

She was very curious, and he was annoyingly evasive about his other clientele. "You won't talk to me about anyone else you're involved with?"

"No, I won't," he stated flatly. "Would you like me to talk about you with them?"

Bri shrugged. "I don't really care if you do."

"Well, I would never assume that about anyone I see."

His response was just slightly stronger than the others, and she sensed that she had offended him with her questions.

"I didn't mean to pry. I'm sorry."

One side of his mouth went up in a lopsided grin. "You'll know when you need to be sorry, Jenny, because you'll be crying over my lap, and your bottom will feel like it's on fire."

He said it so casually, not even looking at her as he took a swallow of the whiskey. Her eyes widened at that, mouth hanging open in a surprised "O", and he just sat there grinning.

"I'm assuming you don't have any children?"

"None."

"No boyfriend? Lover? Fuck buddy?" He already knew enough about her that he would have been very surprised if she'd said that she did have a fuck buddy, but he'd encountered stranger things in this line of work than that.

"None since high school."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Don't you get lonely?"

She shook her head. "No, I really don't. I'm very happy with my own company, and I have a reasonable group of friends—seven or so of them—most of whom are women who are very much like me—they've only ever been single or had a short starter marriage early on, no kids, independent to a fault, dedicated to our careers, not dating now and haven't been for literally decades. We get together pretty frequently, and we all have the money—and the lack of commitment to anyone but ourselves and our immediate family—such that we can travel together at a moment's notice, go out to dinner or drinking and paint the town, not worrying about how the hubby is going to feel about it, or if the kids are okay." Bri pulled her feet onto the couch to sit

tailor fashioned. "It has its advantages and disadvantages, like any choice in life. But for me, and most of my friends, there are more advantages than disadvantages."

"That's very interesting and very unusual."

"Yeah, I know. Out of my seven female close friends, only two of them have had kids. We always joke that—when we retire—we should buy an apartment building and move into it together, all of us single women, then hire a property management company to do all of the maintenance, inside and out. We'd have it made."

Bran nodded almost absently, a finger at his lips. Then he put his hand out between them suddenly, saying softly, "I want you to take my hand."

She regarded it as if it were a water moccasin, but he didn't retract it, even though he was pretty sure she wasn't going to do as he asked. His voice was just slightly stern, with a bit of expectation in it, too, but basically it was soft and deep. "You're a smart woman. You didn't go into this having not done as much research as you could about me and the service I work for. You've undoubtedly read the reviews left by my other clients, and you've checked out the company, too." Bran looked at her questioningly.

Her answer was quiet. "Yes."

"We are in a hotel room, and I guarantee that if you scream even once, the staff is going to come running. If you're as smart as I think you are, you already have the 9 and the 1 typed into the keypad of your phone. I'm bigger and stronger than you are by far, and if I had wanted to hurt you—rob you or worse—I would already have done that and gotten the hell out of here." He leaned a bit towards her, hand still out, words low and calm and comforting. "I am exactly as I have presented myself to you. I'm a Dom, and I very much like submissive women. Unlike a lot of Doms in my line of work—I don't shy away from women who don't

have much—or any—experience. In fact, I like them very much." He paused for a second, then said, "I like you very much, Jenny."

She gave him an extremely dubious look at that, but he ignored it—for the moment. Bran could see that she desperately wanted to do as he asked. She was biting her lip hesitantly, but she was also leaning slowly towards him.

When her hand finally found his, he leaned slowly back, such that she had to move towards him in order to keep her hand in his—he wasn't holding it, and he didn't, even as she settled next to him on the middle cushion.

Well, it was progress.

Their hands lay between them on the couch.

"Jenny, are you a virgin?"

Her worried blue eyes found his. "You said we didn't have to have sex."

"And we don't. I was just wondering. You don't have to tell me anything you don't want to."

"I lost my virginity to Sean McCartney in the eleventh grade."

He frowned. "I can't do the translation from the American educational system to English educational system. How old were you?"

"Seventeen."

Bran nodded. "And you haven't slept with anyone since then?"

"Nope."

"No women, either?"

"No."

"Not even with all of those women around you?" he pried slightly.

"We don't live together. And we don't talk about sex much, surprisingly."

"Because no one is having any," he commented astutely.

Although she hadn't thought of that, even though it was right in front of her, Bri nodded. "That might well be the cause."

"Do you masturbate?"

"Yes, a lot less than I used to because I'm very busy, but yes, very occasionally."

"Good. I'm glad you do."

"You are?" That was a strange compliment, but she'd take it.

"Yes. It means you're more in touch with your sexuality than some of my clients are, and as we've discussed, all of these things we're going to explore are very much sex-adjacent."

Squirming unconsciously, Bri agreed, "Yeah, they are."

"I'm going to put my arm around you," he said, moving his hand out from under hers, to do exactly that, although he wasn't actually touching her, saying firmly, "I expect you to tell me if I do anything that you don't like or that frightens you, Jenny. Do you understand?"

Without thinking, responding purely to his tone, she answered, "Yes, Sir." Then she burst out laughing, covering her mouth to stifle the giggles. "Oh, I'm sorry. I'm just nervous and—except for being polite to someone who's held a door open for me or just filled up my gas tank—I've never called anyone that."

Bran was very glad to hear that she treated service people with courtesy. That was a characteristic that he had noticed was missing in a lot of people nowadays. He hugged her very gently with that one arm. "I know, and it's fine. If I recall correctly, that was something you wanted to do—to call your Dom 'Sir', and I think—as a rule—you should call me 'Sir' when we're together. "

"Yes, Sir," she whispered. It was so stupid, but Bri felt such a surge of satisfaction and pride—and arousal, if she

was honest with herself—at the mere idea that she had been given her first ever rule.

She was stiff as a board, so he got her talking about herself and some of the places she'd been, which got her to the point where she was practically leaning against him as he moved himself a bit away from the corner of the couch, and he didn't even think that she knew that that was what she was doing.

While Jenny was still describing to him the experience of watching a wild seal pup being born in one of the bays close to where she lived, he gently guided her into place over his lap.

When she realized where she was, she tried to jump off him like a scalded cat, but he put his hand on the small of her back—no more, no less than that. He wasn't touching her with his hands anywhere else, and he wasn't even trying to restrain her with that hand. He wasn't exerting any pressure whatsoever—he just laid it there.

He didn't know why doing that worked, but it did—sometimes. Perhaps it was because it was only a slightly intimate place, perhaps it was just a reminder of what he could be for her—or that he wasn't making any demands of her whatsoever, but it was still something she imagined that a Dom would do—he didn't know.

If she truly balked, he would extract himself from her completely and move a bit away from her, so that they wouldn't be touching at all.

But she didn't. Instead, Bri found herself relaxing back down onto his lap, almost against her will, but she couldn't really claim that, because he wasn't really exerting his will over her in the least. He wasn't holding her there or in any way forcing her to be there. He merely had his hand on her back, and she felt very strongly—even on such short acquaintance—that if she had used her safe word or just moved out

from under his hand, he would have left her very much alone.

Dom had been nothing but wonderfully caretaking and very courteous and caring with her since he'd gotten there. He must've thought she was crazy for being so hesitant and tense, but she couldn't help it, and he seemed to realize that, which went a long way towards her feeling better about being with him.

And when she lay down, gingerly, over his knees, he removed his hand. There was no instantaneous groping or grabbing or smacking away at her, either. He just sat there and she just lay there.

"Okay, Jenny?"

Bri nodded. "Y-yes."

"Good. Now, I usually spank a young lady on the bare, but since this is our first time, I'll let you off easy."

"You're going to spank me?" She stiffened.

Bri could hear the smile in his tone. "I'm a Dom. You're a sub. You're over my lap. Those weren't enough clues for a smart girl like you?" He frowned. "You do remember your safe word, don't you?"

That question struck fear in her heart, although she knew it was actually a very good question for him to ask.

"Yes, I do—It's 'safe word'. B-but I-I'm not sure I'm ready!"

"I respect that—although I would have bet that you were — and if you want to get up, you certainly can, Miss Jenny. But we're coming to the end of our session, and I just wanted to give you a taste of what it's like to be spanked by me, so that you can decide whether or not this is something you're really into or if it's something you want to remain a fantasy. It'll help you decide whether or not you might like to book me again." Impulsively, Bran said, "I'm going to put my hand

on your back, Jenny. I expect you to let me know if you don't want me to do that."

It was the gentlest of touches as he began to rub her back slowly and comfortingly, like one would rub the back of a sick child. "I don't mean to make you feel rushed, though, Jenny. As I've said before, we'll take as long as you need for you to feel comfortable with me disciplining you. And if I've misjudged your readiness, then I'm sorry."

She'd never been massaged before—not since she was that sick child. But then, being touched by people she didn't know wasn't very high on her list of things to do. But it felt absolutely fabulous—much more so than she thought it should, to a disconcerting extent.

It did impress her that he had said that he was sorry, too. Non-dominant men had a hard time saying that, so it was very reassuring that he hadn't hesitated in the least to apologize to her—his potential sub.

Bri had to push herself to answer him, but she still sounded more languid and breathy than she ever had before in her life as his knowing hands turned her muscles—and her bones, it seemed—into jelly. "Well, that's not my only consideration. I can't afford too many sessions."

She'd set a cap of how much she wanted to spend on what she still thought of as a misguided misadventure, and she really didn't want to—or intend to—go over that. Even at his very reasonable rate, though, she wouldn't be able to see him too many times.

Bran hated that that was a consideration, but it was for some of the women he saw, which was why he didn't charge as much as he knew others did. He wasn't in it for the money; he was in it to help as many women have what he knew could be a life changing experience as he possibly could.

Although he wasn't much given to whimsy, he sometimes

thought of himself as something of a D/s Fairy Godfather, sprinkling what was almost always very positive, helpful D/s experiences to women who were curious about it. Some of them, he knew, had been satisfied and interested enough to graduate from him to full-fledged BDSM relationships. And some women—a relatively small percentage, he believed—he never saw again after the first meeting.

He really didn't want Jenny to be one of those, for a reason he couldn't quite put his finger on.

"I understand. As we've discussed, it's your decision. Our interactions will have to walk the line between delving into our particular interests—in which, if we were to fully immerse ourselves in them, would mean that I would be making decisions like this for you, based on what I know about you—and allowing reality to rudely intrude on our situation, unfortunately."

He was already thinking that he might offer her a considerable discount, if and when she mentioned again that she would have a hard time paying to see him anymore, and he'd never thought about doing that for anyone else.

The massaging was slacking off, and all of a sudden, his hand was resting on her butt.

Bran heard her gasp and stiffen at that bold move, but she didn't try in any way to get off his lap, either.

Seconds later, he heard a very soft, very tentative, "Okay."

He leaned a bit closer to her. "Okay? To what are you saying okay? Ask me for exactly what you want, please, Jenny."

Dear God, how could she possibly do that? She wasn't at all sure that the words would even come out of her mouth! Could she really ask someone—especially him—to spank her? Mentally, she knew that it went against her best interests, but for one of the few times in her life, she wasn't

thinking with her brain, but rather her genitals, who were all for it.

"S-Sir," she whispered, "would—would you please spank me?" By the end of the sentence, he could barely hear her.

Another time— assuming she wanted to see him again, and he intended to make certain that she would want to do that— he wouldn't allow her to get away with asking him that quietly and shyly, but this was her first time indulging in anything like this. Bran didn't think he'd ever had a client with as little sexual experience as she had. It was amazing to him that she was still here and that she'd pursued this interest to any extent at all beyond the safety of her laptop. He knew that that was a testament to just how intrigued she was about having him do this for her—to her.

"Very good, Jenny," he praised genuinely. Bran couldn't imagine how hard that must've been for her to say.

Then he raised his hand, paused mid-air for just a second or two, and brought it down sharply—but not too sharply—on her rear end.